

**ORAL TRADITION:
ECOLOGICAL CONSERVATION AND PROMOTION OF TOURISM
DESTINATIONS OF MINANGKABAU IN WEST SUMATERA**

By:

Dr. Drs. Khairil Anwar, M.Si

Prodi Sastra Minangkabau / Magister Literature-FIB Unand

E-mail: khairrilanwar@gmail.com

Hp. 085264652828

Abstract

This study discusses the strategic role of oral tradition as ecological conservation as well as the promotion of local tourism destinations. There are many kinds of oral tradition, but in general, it can be defined as the habit that is passed on orally from one generation to the next generation. Recently oral tradition is regarded as the mere story or legend, such as the myths about the place that cannot be proven its existence. However, without being realized by its community, oral tradition has provided the legitimacy of ecological conservation and tourism destinations in its environment.

This discussion uses the perspective of cultural materialism with traditional ontology or oral stories that exist in various regions of Indonesia, especially West Sumatra. Based on the text analysis and story context found behind the story that has become the tradition, there is the material fact on the source of location that is not understood by its community. It is not the myth that becomes the mission of story creation, but the attempt to maintain the ecological existence of the local environment.

The development of reason and human need have developed certain curiosity. In order to prove the truth about the traditional story, the people visit the recreational location narrated in the story. Through oral and technology, oral tradition is exposed on the internet so that the information about the location uniqueness becomes widespread in the social media. It attracts lots of people to visit, then the location develops into the tourism destination. Therefore, the oral tradition is beneficial to the sustainability of earth and man.

Keywords: oral tradition, role, ecological conservation, tourism destination.

I. Introduction

Oral tradition is the cultural property that has not been explored and understood to its fullest by the researchers. The problem of oral tradition is in the hands of the owner. The oral tradition goes on continuously from one generation to the next without understanding about its nature, except as the ritual or habit. Unfortunately, when the flow of information and technology advances into the lives of people, it has changed their way of thinking and lifestyle. The people do not acknowledge the existence of oral tradition anymore because it is considered as something ancient and incompatible with

the logic and non-metaphor present day. In contrast, the past societies live in metaphors. In real terms, all human life is in metaphor.

This is the main problem in this study. Changes in the way of thinking and lifestyle of the community have degraded the value of oral tradition in their life. Consequently, the situation also degrades the values that exist in the oral tradition. As the result, the oral tradition disappears from the society. In the oral tradition, it contains ecological wisdom. The impact on the damage and destruction of the ecological environment can be seen in the traditional values that provide the mechanism of control (Yuwana, 2016: 167), the norm and guide that is beneficial to humans in interacting with the ecological environment and promoting it as the tourism destination. These interactions have shaped the way people view and appreciate the environment. In addition, it also provides the aspects of recreation. From the perspective of sustainable development, the environment and ecology must be maintained in such a way. Therefore, the study of oral tradition is urgent to be carried out as the globalization continues to flow rapidly. Thus, the values in oral traditions that spread among the community can be documented and explored by the researchers.

The studies about environmental conservation and sustainability ignore the local wisdom aspects of the local environment (Irwan, 2017). The focus of attention is only on the level of structure when facing the problem and environmental damage. The superstructure aspects have never been touched by practitioners when discussing and formulating environmental policies (Mufid, 2010: 83). Have you ever noticed the ecological wisdom contained in the oral tradition in preserving and sustaining the environment. In the vicinity of human domicile, there has been the oral tradition for a long time. The oral tradition was created by the ancestor that sought to preserve the environment. For example, in the area on Danau Singkarak outskirts, in the written agreement between the native and Dutch colonists have agreed in making the ban on the forest areas. Until now, the forest has grown into the haunted forest with stories that people do not dare to enter and take the forest contents in vain. Logically, the haunted stories in the forbidden forest have the good impact on ecological sustainability and are beneficial to the sustainability of the environment and human life.

II. Method of Study

This study uses the perspective of cultural materialism. This paradigm sees that the stories and norms contained in the oral tradition are not merely the dogma but the materialist mind for the sustainability of man and his local ecology. According to Harris, the material conditions of society determine human consciousness (superstructure), not the other way around. Cultural materialism presumes that human behavior is controlled by norms of need fulfillment or natural factors. The basic principle of cultural materialism is the principle of determinism from the infrastructure.

Harris sees that the production and reproduction systems guide domestic economic and political behavior (Kaplan, 2002: 129). Such behavior forms the behavioral superstructure. Meanwhile, infrastructure is rooted in the fact that humans are subject to the laws of nature in order to maintain the life survival. Determinism of infrastructure provides the set of strategies to find the causal factors, it is likely that the superstructure and structural components become the autonomy of the behavioral infrastructure. Nevertheless, cultural materialism focuses on causal factors within the infrastructure. It is believed that the important factors are in that infrastructure. This analysis uses traces of texts to provide an interpretation of the materialist aspects contained in the totality of texts and the context of oral tradition.

In the analysis of the cattle ranching infrastructure in India, the norm is to preserve the cow that is the main source of agricultural energy as well as the source of animal protein (milk) for humans. If the cows are digested and consumed then slowly a large number of Indians will lose agricultural resources and protein sources. Behind the developed norm, there is the material aspect that is fought for, namely the quantity of cattle (Sanderson, 1993: 107). This analogy is used as the reference analysis of various sample oral traditions (stories) in the study.

This study is conducted on oral stories containing local ecological wisdom that developed in the community. The ontology comes from documentation done in the field by means of recording. As the sample, the oral tradition is selected in the community of West Sumatra. Selected samples will be analyzed eclectically with the main theory of cultural materialism. The oral tradition is examined for its function within the framework of the local structure and understood its meaning by way of exceeding the structural boundary.

If the oral tradition is structurally understood, it would be regarded as the ancient item and incompatible with recent human mindset and way of life. The oral tradition originally is a myth and fairy tale that is considered the real event (Danandjaya, 1984: 51) but today it is considered unreasonable, it cannot be proven. At this moment, the materialism aspect of the oral tradition has already jumped so far that its collective unconsciously promote the place where the story grows or the background of the story becomes the tourism destination.

III. Oral Tradition: Ecological Conservation and Tourism Destinations

There are many types of oral traditions that are still evolving and inherent in the encyclopedia of local knowledge, there are lots of others that become extinct. The living oral tradition generally relates to its local environment. If the environment changes, then the oral tradition will be lost. It is only the memory that such an oral tradition ever colored the life of people.

The mythical oral tradition is still recognized by the local people. The public recognizes and follows the norms expressed in the story. The collective recognition of

the community grew to other community groups in order to become recreational objects. Information that is developed by word of mouth, from oral to printed media, and it becomes widespread on the internet that confirms the local story in order to become one of the tourism destinations. Ikan Sakti (Scared Fish) in Sungai Janieh, Hutan Larangan (Forbidden Forest) in Paninggahan, and Ikan Larangan (Forbidden Fish) in Balah Aie Kayu Tanam are the examples of oral traditions.

The oral story of Ikan Sakti (Sacred Fish) in Sungai Janieh tells the story of the fish ecosystem that lives in the pond with clear springs. There are several versions of the magical fish. Each version tells about the origin of the fish. The fish comes from the result of the agreed normative violation, namely the indiscriminate felling of trees. As the result of these violations, the children feel the consequences. In essence, this story tells about the belief of the local community that the fish is the magical fish. It is not considered to be magical because it has power, but the belief that the fish is the incarnation of the human children.

Because of that belief, people do not want to consume the animal so that the fish breed and grow bigger. The impact of the belief that the surrounding environment interacts with the fish so that it comes into the magical being. Hill, forest, trees, and water become powerful. The hills and forests around the pond are overgrown with lush and green trees are not cut down by the people. The spring that waters the pond always flows from the hill through the sidelines of the tree's roots.

Besides being the incarnation of the human children, the miracle of the fish is supported by the related story of the fish. According to the public figures, during the Dutch colonial period, a dead soldier was lying on the edge of the pool with no punctured or shooting scars. On the side of the corpse, there is the remaining grilled fish that had been eaten. The soldier's friends suspect the cause is the fish eaten. Since the incident, the story has evolved so the community agreed not to eat the fish anymore.

In contrast, the oral tradition of Forbidden Fish, in Balah Aia Kayu Tanam, there is the story of the river that is used as the fish maintenance area. In this area, nobody is allowed to take all of the fish in it, either in the form of fishing or using the net. The ban is the result of the collective agreement of the local community. In the agreement, there are sanctions for violators of the norm. One of them, *ka ateh ndak bapucuek, ka bawah ndak baurek, in tangah in lariiek kumbang* (upward no sprout, downward no root, amid eaten by the beetle). This sanction is analogous to the tree that died due to no sprout nor roots and the middle has been eaten by the beetles.

Ikan Larangan (Forbidden Fish) is socialized to all members of the community in a traditional ceremony. Socialization includes the rules and norms that apply. Ikan Larangan can be consumed or sold by the community after being harvested together. The period of maintenance of the fish ban is within the span of five years. After the period of five years, the harvest comes. Before the harvest began, a series of ceremonial processions are attended by all layers of people and public figures.

The harvesting procession is performed together by the whole community. Everyone can harvest the fish by entering the river and carrying the fish in the form of nets. Each acquired fish belongs to each of them. After the harvest during the day, prayers are made and meals are eaten together. In the evening, it is followed by the folk feast in the form of traditional art performances.

Another case with Hutan Larangan (Forbidden Forest) in Paninggahan, on the outskirts of Singkarak Lake. The Forbidden Forest is a dreaded haunted area of the local community because there are myths about strange events experienced by the people entering the forest to cut down trees. The experience of being swirled without direction in the forest and found no way out back to the village; meeting the beautiful old lady who owns the orchard and driving her back to the village; being a bride in a magnificent palace with a very lively party; months into the forest and reported missing, suddenly returned to the village in a worn state.

Based on past written evidence, Hutan Larangan is an area in the hills on the edge of Singkarak Lake that is made on native agreements with the Dutch colonial. In the treaty letter, the colonial and the native people agree that the ecological area should not be exploited by anyone. For traditional societies, this kind of agreement is confirmed by the magical powers that become the dogmatic minds of the people. The dogma is grown by creating a variety of stories about the strange events associated with the forest. Historically, the deal is not a concern for the people of the next generation, it develop the myths about the forest that it becomes mysterious.

At certain times, once in year, local people perform ceremonies in the deepest forest areas on the upper Kapalo Banda. All layers of society together enter the forest with food. In the upper river, they eat together with the food that they brought. Before the meal, the prayer is done together as gratitude and prays for the protection from Sang Pencipta (the God) for the safety of the environment and the common good. The ceremony is led by the community leaders.

These three oral tradition samples are the normative metaphor that governs the collective behavior of the community. Such behavior is controlled by the norms of fulfilling human need for protein, energy, or other natural factors. Techno-economic behavior guides the domestic economic and political behavior, which then forms the behavioral superstructure. The available infrastructure is rooted in the natural provisions that humans must follow for sustainability.

1. Forests are a source of life for human beings that must be preserved. In addition to these resources, biodiversity is a source of food for all living things;
2. Forest produces oxygen and water storage. From the roots of the trees, it absorbs water to the countryside and rice fields, and its leaves disperse the oxygen sucked by all creatures;

3. Rivers flow from upstream in forests of various animals, such as fish that can be a source of human proteins and other creatures;
4. Ikan Larangan (Forbidden Fish) in the harvest-regulated river to keep fish from extinction and improve their collective well-being;
5. The pond that is inhabited by Ikan Sakti (Sacred Fish) is the village irrigation that flows the rice fields and becomes the source of springs for local communities and other living creatures;
6. Although Ikan Sakti (Sacred Fish) should not be eaten, however fish seeds that are carried and grown by water currents from ponds along the waterways can be consumed as the source of protein for the community.

Structurally, the story of Sacred Fish, Forbidden Forests, and Forbidden Fish are part of the society social structure. Oral tradition becomes the wealth of local people's literacy, as well as the cultural identity. In addition, the oral tradition also has the role as the entertainment literacy about events and natural events that never happened. The oral tradition also serves as the social norms associated with the preservation of environmental and natural ecology. Nature should not be exploited gratuitously. If nature is exploited carelessly, it will damage the ecological environment and animals. It will harm the sustainability of the environment and human life. The human descendants will lose the source of food.

In this modern era, human needs are not merely the fulfillment of the basic necessities of food and clothing, but also the need for recreation. This need can be fulfilled by going to the places that become the background of oral tradition that developed in society.

Initially, due to limited recreational modes, it was only done by local people. But along with the development of technology, it also came from outside visitors. Their arrival to the site of oral tradition was originally caused by information spread from mouth to mouth. Currently, the information becomes widespread and it grows rapidly through print, electronic, and cyber literacy media. As the result, those who come to visit and recreate not only from neighboring villages alone, but it also has exceeded vast geographical boundaries.

Therefore, the location of Ikan Sakti (Sacred Fish), Ikan Larangan (Forbidden Fish), and Hutan Larangan (Forbidden Forest) become one of the places in order to fulfill the needs of human recreation and bring economic impact on the welfare of local communities. In addition, the stories and myths that live in that location have spread in various media literacy that becomes the media promotion of tourism destinations.

IV. Conclusion

Oral tradition is not merely the tradition passed on orally from one generation to the next generation, but it contains the value that is useful for human life and environmental ecological sustainability. The oral tradition serves as the social infrastructure of society. Ikan Sakti (Sacred Fish), Ikan Larangan (Forbidden Fish), and Hutan Larangan (Forbidden Forest) is part of social infrastructure. The infrastructure forms the superstructure of human behavior that oral traditions are the effort to maintain a balance between production and consumption of the environment. If nature is exploited without considering the aspect of sustainability, then the environment will be damaged, natural resources and animals will become extinct. It will be a disaster for human life

In addition, the story contained in the series of oral traditions is not just a myth and a fairy tale. The story under the collective consciousness of its community has become the promotional medium for tourism destinations, which promotes the venue of oral tradition. It will certainly invite people to visit and it will have the economic impact on the local community.

V. References

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